

This notice is being sent on behalf of Presiding Judge Clark Stankoski, 28th Judicial Circuit Court

Bar Members:

Last week, I met with Judges Bishop, Norton and Taylor, and it was decided that Baldwin County will resume jury trials beginning on September 21, 2020. It is imperative that the wheels of justice continue to move, however slowly.

New procedures designed to keep jurors, other court participants and the public safe from COVID-19 have been put in place to allow us to resume jury trials. Summons will be mailed this week and should arrive at the homes of potential jurors later in the week.

The new juror summons process has recently been developed in response to the current COVID-19 pandemic and will be the first occasion that an online jury qualification process has been used in Alabama state courts. Those individuals receiving a summons for jury duty will be instructed to log onto a dedicated juror website to complete a short questionnaire, using a secure PIN assigned to each potential juror. The website may be accessed by computer or on a smart phone. By completing the form, potential jurors will now qualify for jury service or request to be excused from jury service for a recognized exception online rather than in person. Jurors who are at a heightened risk of contracting COVID-19 due to age or an underlying medical condition may use the online form to request their jury service be deferred until a later date. All requests to be excused from jury service should be made no later than September 4, 2020.

The new juror summons also directs potential jurors to baldwin.alacourt.gov, the official court website for Baldwin Circuit and District Courts, where additional information is provided regarding safety protocols that have been implemented to make jury service safer during the current pandemic. Those new procedures include sanitizing surfaces, mandatory masks, temperature checking for fever, social distancing measures, contactless sanitizing stations, limitations on the number of people permitted in an elevator, limited number of attendees in the courtrooms, use of the "large" courtrooms only, a newly configured jury box and juror seating that will permit jurors to be seated at least six feet from other jurors, and a "jury room" that permits jurors to maintain an appropriate social distance during deliberations and recesses.

Individuals who receive a juror summons and do not have internet or smart phone access that will enable them to complete online registration may contact the office of Circuit Court Clerk, Hon. Jody Wise, at the telephone number provided on the summons.

As always, please feel free to contact me with any suggestions, questions, concerns or issues that you have concerning resuming jury trials.

J. Clark Stankoski, Presiding Circuit Court Judge, 28th Judicial Circuit